Civil Rights History Project
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Interviewee: Harold K. Brown

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Interviewer: David Cline

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: approximately 2 hours, 20 minutes

START OF RECORDING

FEMALE 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

DAVID CLINE: Good afternoon. This is David Cline for the Civil Rights History Project. I work in the History Department at Virginia Tech and have the honor of working with the Civil Rights History Project of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Today is June 28th, 2016, and I am in San Diego, California. This project is also cosponsored by the Southern Oral History Program at UNC Chapel Hill, and, as I said, by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian. Today we have with us Guha Shankar from the Library of Congress is in the room. Behind the camera is John Bishop of Media Generation and UCLA. We have the distinct honor to be visiting with Harold Brown, here in San Diego. And this is the one time that I will coach you at all, is just--. If you could start with a complete sentence. Then we'll just go into conversation. But, "My name is," or, "I am," and your name, and the year of your birth, and where you were born.

HAROLD K. BROWN: My name is Harold K. Brown, known--. Better known as Hal Brown. I was born in York, Pennsylvania and migrated to San Diego through San Diego State University in 1953.

DK: And you were born when?

HB: I was born [in] 1934. And I am the son of Mrs. Emma Brown and I am one of seven siblings.

DK: And could we start with your childhood? You said you were born in Pennsylvania, but if you could tell us a little bit about what your upbringing was like and who your people were.

HB: I'd like to start by saying that, you know, I'm trying to answer the question is, what breeds a civil rights activist or a civil rights militant, as we were called in the sixties? So I grew up in a community, mostly farm community, of approximately 1 percent or less black citizens. And York, Pennsylvania was typical of the United States of America at that time. There was segregated housing. So I grew up in a segregated--. What was called, in those days, a colored community. We were all rather poor, not poor to the extent that we didn't have food and we didn't have clothing. But we were all in pretty much the same boat. It was a group of people who had very few opportunities, if any. We lived--. We went to segregated schools up until the seventh grade, is when we integrated. And so jobs were scarce for our families. And so income was very, very low. So that's the environment I grew up in. And--.

DK: And there are parts of Pennsylvania--I feel like a lot of people don't know this--that were really, really rough, in terms of racial prejudice and segregation.

HB: Absolutely. Absolutely. People don't think of the North--. People from the South don't think of the North as being a tough place to live for black people, descendants of slaves. But it was. And when people moved from--. When blacks moved from the South to the North, they found that, you know, there was a lot of hardship there, in terms of segregated housing and discriminated employment. And so that's what I grew up in, and faced a lot of insults. One of the stories I tell is that--I call it my introduction, really, to racism in America. And that was, when I was in elementary school, we had to go to a black, in quotes, elementary school. And when we would walk, [5:00] oh, somewhere around maybe five miles to the school, pass white schools to get there, and there was a chain works factory en route to our school. And the men used to hang out the windows on the upper floors and just hurl all kinds of racial insults, calling us names, the whole time. This happened every day. And so that was my introduction at age six, you know.

DK: And you're children. And those are adults.

HB: Yes, yes. We were just children.

DK: So, hindsight helps us in these things. Looking back, can you start to see where a race consciousness of some kind started to form for you? Is that something that you have a sense of?

HB: Absolutely. You know, I joke about it when I tell people that, you know, when I was born, and came out of the womb, all I saw was the doctor and some nurses, and they were all white. And so I didn't know I was black until my mother took me home to this colored community. And then I began to look around. I saw these people were a different color than the ones I saw when I came into this world. But that was sort of the introduction that I like to talk about because it illustrates that there was a difference right from the

beginning. And I attribute the psychological and mental exposure to this, which had its impact right from the beginning. And the names, and the insults, and the observation of no blacks being in positions of importance in the city--. All [of] them were whites, and mostly white males. And so this I attribute to the learning in America of a young, black kid, growing up. And so there was just a building on that, you know, from--. Going from a segregated elementary school to an integrated junior high school, and the impact that that had, the difference. And I suspect it must've had an impact on the white students, as well. But that--. Being the only black in a classroom, and experiencing the officers of the school, the teachers of the school, the administrators of the school. You know, it was all, you're in a white world. And here you are, being the victim of insults that come. And everything that you see, just about, substantiates the fact that you are less than the rest of them. And that builds into the mind of a child and, I guess, leads to the point where the psychological test where black kids, say, select a white kid as being the good kid and the smart kid, as opposed to selecting a black kid.

DK: Now, were there any forces that you can remember, whether at home, or in the school, or elsewhere, that were pushing against that for you, that were giving you a different message, a message about black pride?

HB: Well, the one that I cite the most is that the contradiction takes place when I entered junior high school. My homeroom teacher, Cassandra Shay, just sort of adopted me. She was a white math teacher, my homeroom teacher. But she introduced to me the concept of college, which I didn't know anything about, [10:00] never heard of. She introduced me to that and explained that--. Out of the blue, that, "You ought to think about going to college, Harold." And she explained how she went to college, and her family wasn't--. Didn't have

the financial ability to put her through college, so she got a job, and she worked through college, like, cleaning people's houses, and so forth. And so, you know, there--. Here was a--. Made an impression on me. And then, when my football coach there at junior high school says to me, "Hal, you know, you ought to be a dentist." And I go, "Dentist?" [Laughs] That was farthest from--. I never knew a dentist, never saw anybody--. A black professional just was not heard of. We had a few black teachers who taught in black schools, but to have a black person in the community as a dentist, a doctor, and so forth--. We had one black doctor and no black dentists. But that coach of mine introduced me to some things that I had not even thought about. So, you know, there's this--. Now this contradiction begins to build in, is that here is all this white world, and that's bad, but then here are some people who are the same color, but who have shown a great amount of love, and acceptance, and encouragement, and so forth. And I just think, as young people growing up, that's a lot to deal with. The mind is young and being developed. And when you have these kinds of things, which are really unnecessary--. So I credit our--. The forefathers of this country for not looking into the future far enough to prevent all this stuff.

DK: During your schooling, then, and into high school, was there any black history at all that was taught, or--?

HB: None.

DK: No. Yeah.

HB: In fact, I can remember--. And as I used to go back to Pennsylvania on vacations and talk with my friends who I grew up with and went through school. And our black friends used to laugh about this, because the only thing that we saw interracially was slaves pictured. And when that would happen, when they would show those pictures and

everything that these blacks in the cotton fields, picking cotton and everything, we as blacks would scringe down in our seats and try to disappear from that. And then, of course, we found the humor in it, as we became adults, and we would laugh about it. And then, there was another example of none black history teaching. There was--. Our music teacher, there in the junior high school, would always somehow find a song, "Old Black Joe." And she would play that, it seems like, every class that we had, every day. She would play this thing, and she would sit at the piano, and we would all have to sing. Now, remember, you're the only black, or maybe a couple in the class of all whites. And when they did that, you know, black students, I guess, would just grab their chairs tightly and kind of get down and hope that they could just disappear and get through this. And again, as adults, we laugh about it. So, no. We--. I didn't learn anything about black history until [15:00] I was--. Until I graduated from college. And that's when I began, on my own, to read and learn about the history of black folks in America.

DK: So can you tell me a little bit about your journey toward college? You were an athlete in high school, and that was part of what brought you to San Diego. Is that right?

HB: Yes.

DK: Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

HB: That was so--. That was really what brought me to San Diego. You know, I started out as a basketball and baseball player since elementary school. And I was--. In high school, I became quite popular as sort of an accomplished athlete. I was selected as the all-state basketball player in my senior year, and followed in my brother's footsteps because he had also achieved that as the first basketball player in the history of our school to achieve that status of all-state status, and I was the second. So I was very popular in--. As athletes are, in

school, in junior high school and in high school. When I was p--. I was a baseball player, as I mentioned, in addition to basketball. I was too--. I wasn't tall enough to receive any real attention to be recruited to these colleges, and so forth. But two people who had attended San Diego State, older fellows who were in the Navy, and they had been to San Diego, and actually ended up playing basketball for San Diego State--. And as I came along in my senior year, they came--. When they came home to York, they approached me and encouraged me to go there. Well, my counselors had already sort of programmed me to go to Penn State, which I did. And I attended Penn State on a scholarship, on a basketball scholarship, which--. And it paid for my tuition, but that was about it. And there was no money for rent, or food, or anything like that. So I eventually left there and went to--. Accepted a tryout with the St. Louis Browns in Thomasville, Georgia. And I did that, and after a couple injuries, I went back home to York and wrote the coach at San Diego State and said that I was ready to come out there. And so I did that. And I came to San Diego and was--. Because I was a transfer, I was ineligible to play. I had to wait out a year. So the coach at San Diego State told me, he said, "Hal, what you should do--. Let's have you go to the junior college first and just--. You won't miss your education, but you won't be able to play at San Diego State, but you can play there and you won't--. And it won't be counted against your eligibility." I said, "Oh, that sounds like a good plan." Well, it was not correct, because when I went there, and signed up for the classes, and so forth, at the junior college, it would have counted. So I didn't play until I got to San Diego State. And I was--. Between junior college and San Diego State, I was drafted into the Army. And so I spent two years in the Army. And then I went to San Diego State. [Laughter]

DK: So did you end up playing for the St. Louis Browns for a while?

HB: No. Uh-huh.

DK: No, no, because of the injuries.

HB: I did not. I--. One of the things that I talk about, and I try to help with younger people, is making sure that they have someone in their lives who can [20:00] provide some guidance and advice. I grew up with a mother and some older siblings, but there wasn't any person in my life, other than in school--. There wasn't any person to really provide this advice and guidance, and so forth, and introduce me to things that I should be introduced to. So when I went to--. An example of this is, when I went to the minor league training camp for the St. Louis Browns, I went there not knowing that you are expected, when you arrive, to be in shape and ready to play ball. Well, my experience was that, you know, in York, Pennsylvania, it was cold in the winter, and you might get your glove and ball and start throwing a little bit in the gym, come April, and do some running a little bit. So when I got there, I mean, boy, I was shocked. I mean, man, we were going full steam, doing--. Running wind sprints, and throwing hard, and fielding, and all this stuff. And my arm couldn't take it. My legs couldn't take it. And so I was playing--. I was shortstop and I was trying to throw from short to first, and needles and things just felt, like, all through my arms. So that was a bad try. I had to go home. And then I just, you know, waited my time to--. Toward the next step, which was--. My next step was, okay, get on back into college, because I wanted to play ball in college. And that's what happened. I ended up at San Diego State.

DK: Let me ask you--. I want to ask about your military service, but just a question about racial dynamics on teams and in the locker room. Was that a different

situation, or more of the same? Can you tell us a little bit about what your experiences were there?

HB: I think sports is such a great opportunity to address the racial issue. Some of the friends that I really got to have growing up were through sports. And maybe there were a couple or so other white students who I got to be friends with, but the ones I really got to know and have some association with beyond the school boundaries was with those teammates. And all through junior high school, that was true. And of course, you have your--. The blacks who made the team. Of course, we all lived the same neighborhoods, or close by, and we knew each other. We saw each other after school. And we had a separate facility, a separate recreational facility called Crispus Attucks Center--. Community Center that we blacks went to. And so we were together. But getting relationships with your white classmates, and so forth, was really hard. And if it were not for the sports program, I mean, it probably just wouldn't--. Would hardly happen at all. And that all went through junior high school and high school. It was even more difficult to have relationships with the white students, even with the schoolmates, even your teammates, because they came from different parts of the county. And you saw them, and you played, and that was it. The--.

DK: It wasn't like you were going over to each other's houses.

HB: No, nothing like that. You didn't get to really know them, and they didn't get to know you. And then, as in college, playing [25:00] ball in college, it was the same thing. I mean, we had--. You had very few blacks on the team. And the white players you saw at practice, and maybe in the cafeteria once in a while. And that was it. The black players, you know, we were together after the practice, during the evenings, on weekends, sometimes, you

know. So, while sports offered a great opportunity, there still left a lot to be desired. And I regret that more was not done, you know, during that period when I was an athlete.

DK: As you were saying before, that you did go out to San Diego, and then went for the year of junior college, and then the military came calling. [Laughter]

HB: Yes.

DK: Tell us about that.

HB: Well, when I went back--. When I left San Diego S--. When I left school after junior college, for the summer, I went back to Pennsylvania. And--.

DK: And what year was that, approximately?

HB: That was 1953. And so when I went back to York, I inquired about--. Because I didn't want to make a trip back to California, and then get drafted, then have to return back to Pennsylvania and be inducted from Pennsylvania. So I inquired, when I was in York, about my status, my draft status. And the person told me, "Oh, you're right close to being drafted." And whether that was true or not, I'm not so sure. But I said, "Well, I may as well get it over with, go in now and get my two years over with." So that's what I did. And I--.

DK: And this is right at the end of the end of--. The Korean War was winding down.

HB: Yes, right at the end of the Korean War. And I was--. I did my training in Georgia. I was going say get Thomasville. I get it mixed up with my baseball. But it was with the Camp Gordon, Georgia. And--.

DK: And what was the situation like there, at that time?

HB: Well, as long as you stayed on the base, things were okay, mostly. I mean, it wasn't like there was any--. You could mix with males, but there wasn't any mixing with females, as a black person. Now, the movies, the mess hall, and stuff, where you ate, and all that, was fine. There was no problem.

DK: And the barracks?

HB: As long as you stayed on the post. When you went off post, into town, that's when you ran into trouble. And that's where I saw signs on--. As we would be walking down the streets, you'd see signs saying, "No Jews or niggers allowed. No dogs, Jews, or niggers allowed." And you'd see that kind of stuff. And so, of course, we limited our contact with--. We just didn't go into town very much. And that was my basic training. And then I was then sent to New Jersey at Fort Monmouth, where that was my permanent station there.

DK: Okay. And how were things in New Jersey?

HB: New Jersey was fine. We--. There--. We could go to--. After hours, we would go out in the town a little bit, and go out to the--. To a bar, and guys would have some drinks, and so forth. But--. And we never--. I never experienced any problems there, except for one. I received an assignment to go to Louisiana [30:00] on an operation, which was called Operation Sagebrush. And so I was assigned to that. And we were going to--. And, I mean, what I knew at this point in my life about racism in America, I was not going there. And so I, in my naïveté, decided I was going to the post commander and tell him I'm not going down there. [Laughter] And here I am, just an enlisted man. I'm not an officer. I'm an enlisted man. Even an officer wouldn't do that. So I requested--. Well, I went over and just asked his--. To see and talk with him. And he invited me in, and I told him, I said, "You

know, as a Negro, it just doesn't make any sense for me to go to a place where I'm not wanted, and to have to go to the South and be exposed to those conditions." I'm sure I didn't say it in these words. I was a young, shy kid, who was just upset. And because--. And afraid, I guess. So he looked at me, and he listened, and he said something, "Okay, you know, return to your barracks." And so I returned to my barracks and we received orders to ship out. And I was among those who shipped out, along with all the others, and we were shipped down to Louisiana and lived in the bushes, in the outskirts of the towns. And that was--. You know, we just stayed out there. And going in town--. I think I only went in town one time, to Shreveport, and didn't experience anything. But I certainly didn't notice any integration, or anything like that. And we did our time down there, and shipped back to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

DK: So your--. You did your two years, and then back to San Diego?

HB: Yes.

M1: We need to pause.

DK: Oh. [Recording stops and restarts.]

HB: And San Diego State was a good experience. But at the same time, you know, it's just been one incident after another that spoke to you as a descendent of slaves, as a black person, as a Negro, as a colored person. You know, it just kept coming, incident after incident, in a reminder form that you are not a first class citizen in this country. And so my experience at San Diego State, one thing that stands out is that I--. While I was an athlete, I was also interested in student government, and so forth. So, I was encouraged to run for an office in student government, and I did. I won and sat on the council, student council. And on that council I was asked to chair a certain committee. It was called the Constitutions

Committee. And that committee was responsible for reviewing the constitutions and charters of all the on-campus organizations, all the sororities, all the fraternities, and so on. So when I started reviewing these, I saw, in the charters of the fraternities and--. White fraternities and sororities, that it was for white male [35:00] or white female. And, you know, in good conscience, I couldn't approve that. And so I didn't approve them. And, of course, my recommendation was to be made to the council, and then the council would vote on it. Well, of course, when I didn't approve them, that meant they would not get--. Not receive on-campus status and all the privileges thereof. And so, of course, I was called in by the Dean of Students, and we had a chat about it, and so forth. And I never find out what actually happened, whether or not, you know, these people really--. These organizations really received on-campus status or probationary status, for some reason. And I didn't push it beyond that. And that was my experience that really stood out at San Diego State, along with the friendship and the real guidance and love that I received from some of the faculty members at that time. So, again, there was a sort of a balancing of the--. I think there were about twenty-five black students in the whole university at that time. And out of an enrollment, I think it must've been around 11,000, something like that. And here again, you know, you're--. You sit in the classrooms. You're the only black student. And it's the same thing over again. I mean, you didn't run into any--. It wasn't that there were some great incidence, but still, I mean, that's--. You know, the black studies program was created in this country, in part, to provide some companionship for those of that ethnicity. And although there was a lot of pushback on that--. But, you know, it's--. You're young. You want companionship, and friendship, and you need that to grow, and so on. And all students need that. But when you sit there in a land of what you know to be racist towards you, and when

you walk down a street and you're called nigger, right there in San Diego, I mean, that's your life. And you end up, I guess, with some feelings. What those feelings happen to be depends on the individual. For me, it was anger. I mean, I was angry, and I knew that I had to do something about it. I was maturing. I wasn't in junior high school and I wasn't high school age. I had been around a little bit and I matured. And the further I went, the more angry I got. And so that's how I decided, when I graduated from San Diego State, to join the Civil Rights Movement.

M1: You want to pause?

DK: And you had a very small African American community, obviously, at the school. What about within the City of San Diego?

HB: Yeah, it was always around 6 percent. And as I recall, when we were--. Oh, when we had formed the Congress of Racial Equality, here in San Diego, I recall that the number of blacks in San Diego was some--. I think, somewhere around 60,000. And I don't know what the San Diego population was. But that number, 60,000, seemed--. It was--. Well, it was around 6 percent, as I recall.

DK: And so you graduated, but stayed in the city.

HB: Yes.

DK: What else did you do? And you said--. I want to hear the story of you turning to the Civil Rights Movement. [40:00] But what did you do post-graduation, as well?

HB: Well, I did postgraduate work, here at San Diego State, in speech pathology. And I was waiting to see if I could get a job teaching school. Now, here's another thing about where this guidance and counseling for young people is so necessary. I--. When I was in junior high school, and especially in high school, I wanted to be a physical education

teacher and a coach. That's what I knew, and that's where I felt comfortable, and that's what I did best. [Laughter] I liked school, and I was good in school, but I excelled in that area. So--. And I went to San Diego State. I accomplished that. You know, my major was in physical education. And my minor was in speech correction, or the speech pathology area. And--. But I wanted to be a coach. Now when--. After I graduated, I'm waiting around for a job, and it occurs to me, wait a minute. They don't hire blacks to coach in high schools. Now, here I am, you know, all these years, I mean, it looks like I would've realized--. I would've put two and two together through those years. But for some reason, when I came to San Diego, I graduated from San Diego State, I thought, okay, I--. You know, I'm going toward my goal. I'll be a coach. But then, bong. It hit me. They don't hire you. And so, I tried to get a job just teaching physical education on the junior high level, or even in the high school level. So when I applied for a position, not in the City of San Diego, but this was in the city of La Mesa, and I applied. And they said the only way they could hire me--. And I think this guy was a princ--was the superintendent--said the only way he could hire me is if they polled all the teachers in the district to see if it would be okay to hire a Negro. [Laughter] So I said, "Well, forget that." And I just decided that--I was approached by--. There was an organization that was starting called the El Cajon Valley Open Housing Committee. And they formed through--. For the purpose of integrating the neighborhoods in La Mesa and El Cajon, just east of San Diego State. And so I joined with them. This was an all-white group. I joined with them. And then, about a year into that or so, I was approached by a black fellow who happened to be at one of those meetings that we held. And he said that they were forming a chapter of CORE in San Diego, and would I join with them. And then I did. And I think that was 1960. And so that started my career in CORE. And I was a

s--. But I did get a job teaching school. I was--. I received this position as a result of one of my schoolmates at San Diego State who knew me. And I think we were maybe in a class together. So--. And he knew me and they were looking for a teacher there, where he was teaching. And he recommended to [45:00] the principal--. Recommended me. And so they got in touch with me and brought me out for an interview. In the meantime, I had no idea whether I was going to get a job. I mean, I was kind of sweating it out. We were getting, you know, close to September. And I didn't have a job. So I talked with the principal and everything, and they hired me. And I had a great time teaching there for five years. And before I went into the Peace Corps--. I was invited into the Peace Corps to apply for a position as deputy director, which I did, and then was assigned to Lesotho, South Africa--. Southern Africa.

DK: With the Congress of Racial Equality, did you know much about them already before you heard about the San Diego chapter?

HB: No, I knew nothing about CORE until I--. There was a meeting to organize it. And I decided, because this was my first year of teaching, that I better cool it. [Laughter] And something told me, look, don't do that your first year. Let them see what you can do as a teacher. And once you get a year under your belt, then you can pursue your activities in the Civil Rights Movement. So that's what I did. And fortunately, I was selected as one of the five outstanding new teachers in San Diego. And so I had that under my belt. And then I decided, okay, you know, I'll go, and then I became the chairman of the San Diego CORE. And we went--.

DK: Straight to chairman.

HB: Well, yes.

DK: You didn't mess around.

HB: No. [Laughter]

DK: Now, did you--. So this is around 1960, correct?

HB: That was about [19]61.

DK: Sixty-one. Okay.

HB: Uh-huh.

DK: So where were you in, say, 1955, when the Montgomery bus boycott was going on?

HB: I was--. I had just separated--. No. I was still in the Army. I went in in [19]54, and I was separated from the Army in [19]56. So I was at Fort Monmouth then.

DK: Mm-hmm. And would you have--.

HB: Watching television and all that.

DK: Okay. Yeah. I was going to say, would you have gotten newspapers, or even black newspapers? Were they allowed on base? I know sometimes they weren't. That--. Were you following the news?

HB: I was following the news through television, but never saw a newspaper while I was at Fort Monmouth. And then I would get weekend passes once in a while, and so I'd go to York and visit my family and, of course, the papers and the news there. But I didn't rec--. I watched on TV all the civil rights activities that were going on and some basketball. [Laughter]

DK: Okay, so--. I just wanted to ask that question.

HB: Sure.

DK: So back to CORE, then, can you tell me about what that was like, organizing the chapter, and what you all recognized as the major challenges in the city, and what you all wanted to focus on?

HB: Yes. Well, we had a person who--. I think he was affiliated with National CORE in some way. And he helped us to form the San Diego chapter. And I remember we met and, you know, we wrote up the by-laws, etc., etc., and formed a 501(c)(3) organization. Then, as we met--. And I think we were meeting pretty regularly then--. We had elections and so forth. And they had asked me if I would run for the position of chairman, [50:00] and--. Which I did. And there was some problems there because prior to that, I had also become a member of an organization, which was known as a black nationalist organization. It was the Afro-American Association. It was labeled, I think, a black nationalist organization. That's what the media--. And that's what they called us, a black nationalist--. And I didn't know what that was at first. So what the purpose of that organization was--. And still there's a need today--. We formed it to educate black people about the plight of black people in America, teaching black history, and having discussions, and so forth, about the conditions of black folk in America. And so that was a nice experience, a very good experience. And--.

DK: So this connects back to when I asked you earlier if you had had black history before in school.

HB: Yes. Yes.

DK: And you hadn't. So this is a program of self-education.

HB: Yes. Absolutely. And my in--. First introduction to many of the books that I have in my library now, and discussions, and so forth--. And I reached a point where I

remember--. I think the first one I read was *Before the Mayflower*, by Lerone Bennett. And I had discussions with some young people about our history. And so then, you know, when I ran for the position of chair, I became the chairman, and the conditions were deplorable, as we found them, here in San Diego. Not only were there segregated schools. As I recall, there were nineteen schools in San Diego that were segregated. And we found that to be serious. But we found employment discrimination to be really our top priority. And so we worked on the businesses, the companies around San Diego to try to open up these companies to hire blacks. Now, blacks could not be hired in the grocery stores. These chain stores and everything, they didn't hire blacks, even as--. What do you call those--?

M1: Baggers.

HB: Baggers. Yes. Much less than other positions of cashier, and manager, and everything. You couldn't even be hired as a bagger. And there were no freeways back then, so there's--. Downtown, there were no blacks who worked in the downtown. Just prior to some years before I started in CORE, they had had some demonstrations against, I think it was Woolworths, down there, because you couldn't sit, you couldn't eat in Woolworths. And it was led by a black dentist, Dr. Kimbrough, who--. Dr. Jack Kimbrough. And so, you know, the conditions were--. I mean, you couldn't rent--. You couldn't live--. You couldn't rent or buy a house or apartment outside of what was called Logan Heights, was--. Where blacks were forced to live, Logan Heights. And now it's known as Southeastern San Diego. So you had to live in that area. And then--. And I talk about an example of that is when the young lady that I married in 1967, she came to San Diego. She was recruited to San Diego--.

DK: Should we take a--. [Interruption] You were--. We were just starting to talk about the woman that--. Who you married.

HB: Oh, yes. Yes.

DK: Yes, in 1967.

HB: She [55:00] was recruited to come to San Diego with General Dynamics. She was a math major, who graduated from Alabama State University. She came--. She was living in Ohio, Columbus, Ohio, at the time. She was recruited to come to San Diego to work for General Dynamics as a systems programmer, computer programmer. And so she accepted, and she came here, and couldn't find a place to live. She was given a list by General Dynamics of places to--. You know, apartments, and houses, and so forth that she could go and--. Well, she would call those places. And when she would get there, they would say they have a vacancy, of course. And then, when you got there, and they saw who she was, they'd say, "We don't rent to Negroes." And so that was it. She had to go on to the next place. And so she went there. She couldn't find a place to live. And even though she would call and [they'd] say they had a place. But when she got there, they didn't have one there; they had just rented it or something. So she was--. She had to stay in the Y until she could find a place to live. And I met her because I was planning to go into business, and I was going to leave teaching, and I went to sell new automobiles to kind of get into the field and business. And when I went in there, she was buying a car to--. So she could get back and forth to work. The sales guy introduced us and asked if I would show her where General Dynamics was. And she had only been in San Diego over a day or two. And so I said yes. Well, she complained--. When she went back, she complained to the cleaning lady, who was black, at the Y, and this--. And she was saying, well, you know, she can't find a place to live, and blah, blah, blah. And so the sales lady said, "Honey, what you should do--. There's a man in town you should call. You call Hal Brown. And he'll--." [Laughter] And so she

said, "That sounded familiar." So anyhow, that's how I met her, and I started showing her around to find a place to live. And finally, she was--. I had a--. I was acquainted with an apartment where one of my fellow teachers lived. She--. We had had a little party or something over at her house, and I remembered that, and I thought that was a nice apartment. So I said, "This would be a nice place for you to live." Showed her that, and she said, "Oh, yeah. That's nice." It had a pool there. And so she went in to talk with the manager and the manager said, "Well--," She called first and he said he had an opening. Then, when she went by there and he--. Then he said no. He said, "Well, we just can't rent to Negroes." And so she said, "Well, why?" And he said, "Well, the owner, who lives in Canada," he said, "doesn't want us to rent to Negroes." So I was with her, and I was sitting over there while she was talking with him. And then I got up and I said, "I don't believe that." And he looked at me and said, "Well, that's what--." I said, "No, I don't believe that." I said, "Here's what I'll do. I'll go around--. You and I will go around to each apartment, and we'll knock on the door, and we'll ask that tenant whether or not they would mind or object to living next to a person who is a Negro." I had a little thing up my sleeve. I was going to go to my friend's place first [laughter] in her apartment. And--. But he wouldn't do that. He--. And he said, "Oh, no, no, no." He wouldn't do it. So he said, "I'll see what can happ--. What we can do." Well, we left. She called back, I guess, the n--. It was the next day or so. And he said, "No." He said, "The owner in Canada just doesn't want to rent to a Negro." And so [1:00:00] I said, "Well, you know, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to round up a hundred of my black friends, and we're coming over to your apartment building, and we're going to take off our clothes. We'll have our bathing suits on, and we're all going--. Get in that pool." [Laughter] He said, "Oh, no. I'll tell you what. I think we can let her

rent the apartment." And that's how she got the apartment. I had to threaten him with that. And I guess that imagery was just too much, to see all those black folks. And then all his--. Those people that he was referring to about moving out, I guess they--. He visualized they would all be gone if we did that. So anyhow, that's how she finally got to move in. So discrimination in housing was terrible. There were covenants, of course, in places--. In all the places, in homes and things where people couldn't sell their home to a black person. And so we had a lot of demonstrations against the California Real Estate Association. And then we--. Of course, we picketed and had sit-ins at various places, trying to get jobs for blacks back in those years. And our biggest project was against the Bank of America, which, that's where I received my jail sentences, from the Bank of America demonstrations, and also, from the San Diego Gas and Electric demonstrations. So--.

DK: And what were the goals there, especially with Bank of America?

HB: Well, we wanted them to open their employment to Negroes back in those years. And be--. Same thing for the San Diego Gas and Electric Company. So at that time, I was chairman of the western region of CORE. And so we had--. They had decided that we would have a movement, a demonstration, and we would take action against Bank of America throughout the State of California. And that's what we did.

DK: What did the western region cover?

HB: All the states from--. I think we even included Colorado. But in California, and Oregon, and Washington, and Utah.

DK: So you had really risen up in national CORE. Yeah.

HB: Yeah. I was on the--. What we called the Advisory Council, National Advisory Council. That's where, you know, Jim Farmer and I became friends, and Floyd

McKissick and I became friends. And we had quite a project against the Bank of America. And we--. The results were so good. I mean, although the Bank of America would never admit it, but, I mean, we forced the Bank of America and the San Diego Gas and Electric Company to start hiring Negroes. And they did. I mean--. And they would not come to me, talk with me directly. But they would talk to one of the ministers in the community about, you know, could they find some Negroes to come down and apply for the jobs and everything. So the minister and I were friends. So that's how I got to know that. And--. But they did. They hired. And I argued in court that our defense was that, if you look at the results--. But, of course, they prosecuted them, and the law is the law. "You broke the law." They got us for trespassing. So we broke the law and--. [1:05:00]

DK: For prote--. At a protest?

HB: Yeah.

DK: What were--. So what were the strategies that you used?

HB: We did--. We had marches, and we had sit-ins. We had coin-ins. We had--. With the SDG&E, we had mail-ins, where we would mail in--. Get people to mail in short of their due, their balance due for the month. We would send either over or under. And just kind of a nuisance factor. [Laughter] But it was effective. And--.

M: What was the coin-in?

HB: The coin-in was we would stand in line at the teller's window, and we would have a lot of pennies with us, and we would either ask for pennies, we would give them ten dollars and we would ask for some change. And we would stand there and count all the pennies. Or we would bring pennies with us, and when we got to the front of the window, we would make our deposit, or what we were going to do, and we'd count out--

DK: One at a time.

HB: --the pennies one at a time, one at a time, one at a time, while the others were sitting on the floor, singing our songs, and things. And that was--. You know, that was very effective. And it created some real results. I mean, you look at those banks and things now, and of course, I always point out, I mean, I'm not saying take--. The San Diego CORE [should] take full credit for that, but there was a national movement going on. And in that context, I mean, we were able to be very effective. And we laid it on the line. We laid our jobs on the line. And I was called to appear in Sacramento at the Board of--. I guess it was the Board of Trustees over the Education, the state superintendent, and so forth. And I was called to come there to explain why I should not have my teaching credential removed from--because of my leadership in the-- in CORE. So, you know, I had a lawyer who was in CORE, as well, and went with me up to go to defend myself. And I don't know if it was just a scare tactic, or they couldn't--. Didn't want to pursue it, but they didn't take my credential. But that was sort of a scary time. [Laughter] Yeah.

DK: Still, that's intimidation. Yeah.

HB: That's really intimidation, is right. But that was--. We did well. We served our jail times. We were able to serve our jail times on weekends. And so that helped--. I mean, I was still teaching school. And--. That's my wife. I was teaching school. And they said, "Well, you know, you can serve his time on weekends," which I did. But that was some really effective times back then.

DK: Now was the CORE effort in this area largely African American? Was it an interracial organization?

HB: That's a good question. And I always point out to people that during those years, there were more white members than there were black members. There were blacks and whites. And the whites were probably two-thirds of the chapter. And I can remember going out strongly, trying to recruit blacks to [1:10:00] become members of CORE, or just to participate in some way with CORE. I mean, you know, membership dues was twenty-five dollars. [Laughter] And everyone could afford it, but we could not--. There were--. Those were the times where blacks did--. In my opinion, were very much afraid to be involved in the Civil Rights Movement. And so we didn't have many. It took a lot of work to try to get them involved. I mean, even at our national meetings, we would discuss that a lot, and at our national convention, we had a big thing about trying to get more blacks involved. And so I spent a lot of time on trying to do that. But that was tough. Blacks did not participate in the Civil Rights Movement here in San Diego to any degree.

DK: Why do you think that was?

HB: Well, I think it's because they were fearful of reprisals. I mean, I just--. They did not want to risk whatever they had. Of course, our comeback was, well, you don't have very much to begin with. But whatever they had, they just did not want to risk that. And there were comments that would come back to me a lot that--. Something about, you know, that, "I never would be able to keep my job because they would find a way to fire me." And so were--. Which there was some attempt, I guess. But--. So I just, did not want to risk that, even to the point where they wouldn't admit to their white friends that they even knew me, I mean, friends of mine. And so it was pretty bad back in those days. Whatever they had, they didn't want to risk losing it.

DK: What--. If you know, what are the hist--. What were the historic origins of the black community here? Where did people come from? Was it mostly the port, or working--. Or war industry? What brought people [inaudible]to San Diego?

HB: I understand that [a] number came through the Navy. And some--. A lot, it seemed, had no--. I don't know of any surveys or any research done in this area, but it seemed, from talking with people, that a number of people came from Texas area. But my understanding is they were introduced to San Diego through the Navy. Some people got here--. I don't know how--. Out there in a place called Ramona up there, that there were Negroes that settled there, back--. I don't know when that was. It was probably either the very early 1900s or late 1800s.

DK: Another thing I was going to ask about, because I was asking about sort of the interracial organization, but there was already a large Latino population in San Diego at that time. No?

HB: No.

DK: There was not a large Latino population?

HB: Mm-mm. No. In fact, I don't know the stats on it, but over in southeast San Diego, that was known as a black community. And there were very few Latinos living there. Now I think it's two-thirds Latino. No, there just weren't very many--. The Mexican population was evidently very small back then because they certainly weren't visible.

DK: Okay. So that came later?

HB: Yes.

DK: Yeah. Okay.

HB: Mm-hmm.

DK: Another thing I wanted to ask about was other civil rights organizations. So you're here with CORE, but we're talking about early [19]60s, when you have the student sit-in movement happening, Freedom Rides, etc. Were there other organizations that came into this area, or that you were in contact with, and worked with, or that you were paying attention to from afar?

HB: The only organizations [15:00] were the NAACP, the Urban League. Those were the only other organizations. And the NAACP, at that time, was practically invisible. They had no participation with us in the Civil Rights Movement in San Diego. And the Urban League was--. Had no participation with us in the Civil Rights Movement. But they were here. They were present. You could contact them. The NAACP--. And I say, you know, not exaggerating, I mean, I tried to find and join them, and end up--. Honestly, I did. And I just--. I couldn't. I mean, wherever they were supposed to have an office, it wasn't open. And you'd have to call and you couldn't contact them. And I tried and tried. But, well, the only organization other than CORE was, as I mentioned earlier, the Afro American Association.

DK: And did that continue, or did that also fade out?

HB: That faded out. I became so involved in CORE, and I don't know really what happened to it, but it kind of just faded.

DK: So if you can keep us going with your involvement with CORE--. So we're sort of in the early [19]60s now--. Can you just take us forward?

HB: Well, one of the things that I did not mention, which I'm going to try to write about and include this part of it, is in--. What people didn't actually realize about CORE is, CORE was an organization that had internal problems, too. And so, I mean, I was in a

position where I was not only fighting white racism on the outside, but I was fighting opposition from the inside. And that opposition was in the form of--. And I really don't know. I mean, it--. People--. It was rumored, and by private citizens, as well as the FBI, that we had the same problem as other chapters throughout the country had with infiltration of other groups. And I only know that the peace movement was the only group that I knew was--. Wanted to become active in our organization and to exert some influence on what we did. And I refused that, because I was very myopic in my view that we had enough on our plate, in our minds, to try to conquer this racial problem against Negroes in America. And we had enough to do with that. And I was not interested in trying to use my personal resources and energy to take on some other battles, like the peace movement, and so on. Well, the other issue was communism and Trotskyite-ism, and I didn't know what a Trotskyite was, [Laughter] and a communist, either. First I heard about communism was in high school, in history books. But I knew nothing about it. So while they tried to accuse us of being communists, I didn't even know what they were talking about. But anyhow, that was a way of labeling us, the CORE and the other organizations, that you're--. Been infiltrated by communism, and so on. But there was a battle of--. I couldn't identify it. I couldn't label it with any particular name, but there was a tremendous battle [1:20:00] inside our organization to oust me and take over, you know, the leadership with another person and another group. And so those were some really, really, really tumultuous times, and quite painful. More painful, I would say, than the fight against the companies that were segregating, were discriminating in employment, and the housing, and all that stuff. It was more painful because it came from the people inside the organization, both blacks and whites.

DK: And what was the result of those struggles?

HB: Well, I've never been asked that question because the truth would be that the results of that constant fighting--. I can't think of a better word--. Fighting was that I finally left. And it was at the end of my--. It was--. My jail sentence is what I was doing then and all that. And after that, I resigned, and left, and CORE just kind of--.

DK: So after you left, it really--.

HB: Went bye-bye.

DK: Just evaporated.

HB: Yeah, yeah.

DK: And when was that, approximately?

HB: I think it was [19]67. And I think there was an attempt by a friend of mine to take over the leadership. But then when we left and went to DC for preparing to go over into Africa--. Peace Corps--. My understanding was that the--. Oh, the--. I can't--. Well, I'm going blank. The Black Power movement--.

DK: The Black Panthers, or --?

HB: Black Panthers. [Laughter]

DK: Yeah, yeah.

HB: The Black Panther movement, and the US movement. Do you remember the US movement? There was a problem in San Diego. And I was gone, so all this is hearsay. But there was a lot of infighting between those two organizations, and so on. And so--.

DK: And that really came in after you left?

HB: Yeah.

DK: So you weren't here to see it.

HB: No, I wasn't here to--.

DK: Even arrive. Okay.

HB: No, I wasn't here. And so CORE just kind of, I guess, faded away.

DK: And then a sort of--. Another wave came in behind it. Yeah. Yeah.

HB: Yeah, and that was pretty temporary. I mean, there was a lot of fighting and stuff that went on, but I don't think there was any real--. Anyone had really grabbed onto the issues and pursued those issues, or tried to replace CORE or anything. They just--. I don't really understand it now. I don't--. Just what happened, but it just seemed to fade away, US and Black Panthers, at least in San Diego.

DK: At least in San Diego. Right, right, right. So then you were in Lesotho for a couple of years.

HB: No, I was there for one year.

DK: One year, okay.

HB: Just a little under a year.

M: Okay. Okay. [Recording stops and restarts.]

HB: That's another story in itself, that I always find, because of the way I grew up, and the family I grew up, I always find humor in a lot of these tragedies. But when we went there, Lesotho is a country that's completely surrounded by South Africa. And so getting in and out, you had to go to--. Through South Africa. So when my wife and I went over to Lesotho, we had to stop in Johannesburg. And so we were waiting for the flight to take us to Lesotho the next morning. And so, of course, [1:25:00] I mean, Apartheid was very strong then. So what they did was they had some--. A room that was above the airport somewhere. And that was for blacks could--. But you had to stay in that room. You

couldn't be in the airport anywhere. You had to stay in that room until your flight left. Now these were for Africans. I was African then. You know, it was the first time I was considered African. Well, they put us up there in that room, and we stayed there. So I decided the next morning that I was going to test it, and just get out and walk around the airport to see what--. And I did that, and the next thing I heard was over the PA system that, you know, will Harold Brown report to such and such and such? And my wife saw the--. Some guys coming and chatting, standing around, chatting, chatting. And she was getting worried because her fool husband was out there, going, you know--. [Laughter] Trying to get jailed, and so forth, in South Africa. But anyhow, one guy came up to me, and I suspect that it--. That he was from the United States embassy. He came up to me, and kind of stood and looked the other way, and whispered, and said, "Is everything all right? Is everything okay? Is everything all right?" And I looked and said, "Yeah, as far as I'm concerned, it's okay." So we finally got--. They got me back, and the plane came, and we were off to Lesotho. And so now we land in Lesotho. There's a black prime minister, and so on. And we landed and the people seemed to be pretty joyous, you know. It's my wife and I, two African Americans, two blacks. I mean, they--. Blacks. To them, we were African, you know, I mean, they didn't--. That's a term we use in America, "blacks." I mean, we were Africans. So we turned in, and they seemed to be--. You know, greeted us well, was all--. Everything was really nice. And then, sometime later, maybe a month or so later, the Peace Corps volunteers came. And so they land in the airport, and then coming out of those planes are all these white students, you know, and [laughter] it was just really funny, because I could imagine how the Basotho--. I thought they were in shock because they saw us. And they didn't know anything about the Peace Corps. They thought, oh, there's Peace Corps. The

Peace Corps, in their mind, was black. And they saw all those whites. I think we had about-- I think three black Peace Corps workers. So they came off. And then, of course, it was-- the war was on. We were--. The Peace Corps was accused of all kinds of things, you know, and spying on Lesotho, and it just went on and on for that time. And then, while we were there, of course--.

DK: And you were one of the directors of the program in Lesotho?

HB: Yeah, I was the deputy director.

DK: Deputy director. So were you being called in to answer to these things, or having to handle PR?

HB: No. We had a chargé d'affaires, and not an ambassador, chargé d'affaires. But no, he never consulted me. But I was invited to speak to--. By different people in Maseru, which is the capital, to speak at their schools, and so forth. And here's--. This Negro American is here, you know, which they've never seen before. And I did. And they would ask me about--. What did they call this? About, I guess, Africans in America, blacks in America. And I would tell them, you know, and they had--. They were pretty sophisticated, [1:30:00] many of them. They knew what was going on around the country, and they would ask all these questions about how we were treated in America. And I'd tell them the truth, just like I'm answering questions here. I would tell them. Well, evidently, it got back to the chargé d'affaires, and his people, and they didn't like that, because I was exposing America, I guess, you know, and that's still the problem we have today. I mean, that's why we're doing history right now, to try to get America to know and understand what happened and what's happening now. And I go to the third step in my writings, what should happen in the future. But that was the situation in Lesotho. And finally, Martin Luther King

was assassinated. And that was just too much for me to bear. I couldn't remain there, out of the country, and while all this was going on back home. And so I told my wife to get packed because I've got to go back. And so I did. And we left, and I guess the chargé d'affaires [Laughter] wasn't very happy about that. So we came back, and--.

DK: So had news reached you of what the response was in various cities to King's death?

HB: Yeah. Yes. Uh-huh. Yeah. What was going on, and what--. When Martin Luther King was killed, I went to the church, to the AME Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church there, in Lesotho. And I asked if we could have a memorial service there for Martin. And he said, "Oh, yeah, of course." And so we put together a really nice memorial service in honor of Martin. And at--. The whole time we were there, and before we got there, the King of Lesotho was under house arrest because he opposed Apartheid. And they--. The people were able to put in a Prime Minister who--. Whether he agreed with Apartheid or not, he went along with Apartheid. But the King was sort of imprisoned. And so when we had this church memorial service, who walks in? The King. It almost brings tears to my eyes now. Yeah. He walked in and sat, and through the whole service. And I gave the remarks, and so forth, with an interpreter. And my wife sang a hymn. And then we had some talks by some of the Basotho leaders. And it was just a beautiful, beautiful ceremony. But when the King came in--. You know, there, there's--. In South Africa, they--. You probably have heard this. The ladies give a kind of a shrilling--. It go--.

DK: Ululation.

HB: Yeah. Uh-huh. Ooh, it's just a sound that, [sound effect], but it's high, and it's--.

DK: Haunting. Yeah.

HB: And so, you know, when he came in, it was just that. I mean, you know, that--. It was just--. We had been invited to his palace a couple times, my wife and I. But when he walked in there, boy, it was really something. So after that--. And then, you know, we were--. Got packed and everything, and then came back to the States, and went through the out-processing of the Peace Corps. Ended up trying to get back to San Diego, and I couldn't find a position. So that's when Floyd McKissick and I started this company in Harlem, [1:35:00] Floyd McKissick Enterprises. And so I worked there for, I don't know, less than a year, and then I moved to the bank, and I worked for Marine Midland Bank.

DK: For which bank? I'm sorry.

HB: Marine Midland, M-I-D-L-A-N-D, on Wall Street. And we did that, and then, from there, I was asked to come back by an old friend of mine, who had been exposed to CORE when I was leading CORE. He wasn't a member, but he was around, and knew, and then he kind of became a little involved, but not really. But he and I got to know each other, and so he had become a student, along with some others, at San Diego State. And they started--. Were trying to start a black studies program. And again, more infighting, and so forth, and so they couldn't really get it going and everything. So he called me in New York. And I was a--. You know, a loan officer there at the bank. And he said--. Asked me, would I be interested in coming back to San Diego? And, well, you know, I'd been trying to get back to San Diego all this time. So I said, well--. It was a position where I was to be assistant to the president. And I thought about it because Wells Fargo had been holding a position for me, also, but they couldn't meet my salary requirements. And so I was just kind of waiting that out. But my wife wasn't--. She was just happy as she could be to get back to

San Diego. So I said yes. So we came back to San Diego, and then that's when I started working, in September of 1971, at San Diego State. And I was--. My plan was to organize that program, plus some other responsibilities that I had on the campus. But my plan was to get into the business area, and--.

DK: And I understand your hiring broke some ground at San Diego State.

HB: Yeah. Yeah. I was the first black administrator that the university ever had. And also, I--. During my first year there, I hired some faculty members. I hired--. From other--. Who had just finished their PhDs that were working at other universities. And I hired them and brought them to San Diego State. And then we established a curriculum. We established a major and a minor. And back in that--. Those years, those were very early years in black studies. Yeah. And I was able to get the university to accept our courses to fulfill the general education requirements, just like all the others. I mean, that was a major coup. And that's one of the things I'm most proud of, really. And so we got that major, and we got a minor, and we had our general education required courses, and we went on. And my plan was to do that for a year, and then pursue my administrative career, which my goal was to be--. Was to become president of a college or university, eventually. And I had to stay there, to finish what I wanted to finish in the Afro American studies program for two years. And then I left and went over into the--. Became the director of the computer services for the university. I did the other administrative things on campus. And I left the program, and it was--. You know, it's now a [1:40:00] full-fledged department. They changed the name to Africana studies, rather than Afro American studies. But it's a full-fledged department in--. At San Diego State.

DK: Do you still retain ties, at least emotional ties, to that department?

HB: Yeah. Emotional, but I've been away in--. Since--. Well, that was [19]73. And--.

DK: But that was your baby.

HB: [Laughter] Yeah. I just--. The baby has grown. So--. But that was a good experience.

DK: And so how--. And then you--. So you went on to do other things at San Diego State?

HB: Mm-hmm. I became the associate dean of the--. Within the administrative--. I forget the title. I forget--. But it was associate dean of--. In administration. I forget what that was. But then, I went on to take--. The president asked me to head up the computer services for the university. And I did that. And then, in 1980, I went to become the associate dean in the College of Business Administration, and that's where--. I retired from there, after, I guess, twenty-six years as the associate dean there. And then I went into real estate development, and that's what I'm still involved with.

DK: Still doing. Yeah.

HB: Yeah. I retired from San Diego State in 2004, but I had dangled in real estate during my latter years. But I'm just reminding myself, before that, what I did was--. In 1987, I spearheaded the formation of an organization called the Black Economic Development. And it was called the Black Economic Development Task Force. And I did that for ten years.

DK: Was that just in San Diego, or--?

HB: In San Diego. Mm-hmm.

DK: In San Diego. Yeah.

HB: Did that for ten years. And then I--. As the associate dean, I founded a program, a certificate program in community economic development, developed a curriculum there, and used the faculty there, in our college, our business college, and a couple people outside the university. And that was a very successful program. I did that until I retired in 2004.

DK: And community members could participate?

HB: Yes. Mm-hmm. Yeah, community members. We had a full--. It was about an eight-month program. And it turned out to be--. I remember when I retired again, you know, it--. Which I knew it would. I mean, they kept it there because--. That program because of me, which is crazy. But that's really a fact. I knew--. And so I knew, after I leave, they would let it go, because they couldn't fund it. I raised funds to supplement what the university put into it, in terms of offices, and a couple people who worked for me. But to run the program, you know, I raised funds outside the program. Plus, it got tremendous publicity, and the PR was very good, so the university liked that. But they weren't going to put in a lot of money into the program. And the program could not pay for itself because you just couldn't charge enough to make it [1:45:00] pay for itself. You could do it in New York. You could charge that much, you know, at Columbia, or NYU, and places like that, where I'm familiar with. I mean, their programs, they could charge a lot of money from--. People would come and pay that money. But we couldn't charge that much for it, so it just couldn't pay for itself. So I knew if it wasn't bringing money, they were going to [sound effect], which they did.

DK: Was that disappointing to you, to see some of these things you've worked so hard on--?

HB: Yeah, but I was kind of used to it, you know, because the--. Well, CORE disappeared. I--. Right, I guess I failed to mention that I founded the--. A program called Leadership Training. Right as I finished CORE, I did that for a year. Right, Then, I went into the Peace Corps. But that was a tr--. It was a good program, the Leadership Training program was really great. And it got a lot of applause, even from the Labor Department. But then that went--. When I went into the Peace Corps, they tried to keep it going for a year, but that went poof. So then I--. But another thing I left out was, well, the Black Economic Development Task Force. But we did that for ten years. And then, when you're doing it, as you probably are aware, when you're in these not-for-profit organizations, and you found them, and you're instrumental in really getting things organized, but 90 percent of the work ends up with you. And so [I] formed the Black Economic Development Task Force. That--. After ten years, and I said I couldn't do it any longer, it went by the wayside. Then I formed an organization, while I was at the business school, called--. It was an organization to bring together business--. The business community to discuss racial matters. And so I had a couple friends who were very prominent in San Diego, multimillionaires who--. And so I got the two of them to join with me, and we had that program where we met once a month at the hotel down there in Mission Valley for lunch, and had these discussions about race matters. And finally, after ten years, I got tired, and nobody take my place, and so that went by the wayside. So--.

DK: Did that group have a name, too?

HB: Yeah. It was called--. CLUB was the acronym, Community Leaders Undoing Biases. And that was a good group. People said they really enjoyed that. But the two guys that I brought, I mean, they had their own stuff going on and everything. But I convinced

them that they needed to do something in this area. And they said, "OK, Hal. Let's go. You do it." [Laughter] "We're with you." But they weren't going to get, you know, make this thing go, and keep it going. So that went by the wayside. So everything that I--. unfortunately, I guess, some academicians would accuse me of not following the rules of delegation, [laughs] not being able to delegate. But the reply to that, I heard someone say, "Yeah, but delegate to whom?" [Laughs] Because, you know, who--. There has to be people there. And most people aren't willing to take on that kind of a burden. And it's a lot of work.

DK: Well, let me ask you, then, certainly, because you said something earlier that really caught my attention about studying what's happened in the past and what's happening now. And then you're--. The piece that you like to add to it is what should happen.

HB: Yes.

DK: So looking back on this amazing career, and all of these things that you've been involved in, and bringing it up to the present, [1:50:00] where we are now, and what we're facing now, what should happen?

HB: The first thing is that we need to look at the past and see what happened, and then to kind of find some lessons from that. As an example, there was a big fight amongst black members of the community throughout the country, I think, that--. Not to follow this thing of integration. That wasn't necessary, shouldn't be a thing. And as I read sometime later, that CORE--. It must've been after I left, but they had some--. In the national committee and the national convention about, you know, not having this as even part of the Constitution and by-laws is having this thing about integration. Well, some people felt that that was the way to solve this problem, of course. And others felt that that wasn't the way.

So I think we need to learn the lessons back then, and we need to learn lessons about what happened. I mean, how--. And that's what--. I'm hoping to get a book written to kind of show, as you've been asking me these questions, how you get to that point where you become a militant, or whatever they want to call us, back in those days, how do you get to that point? I was a mild-mannered, quiet kid, shy, who was interested in athletics, and who excelled in athletics. But that's what I knew, and that's--. How did I get to this point where I'm willing to sacrifice my life, and my career, and everything else to this point? I wasn't crazy, and not insane. And so I hope to address that. And then, to get into the future, say, okay, what do we do now? We had the Civil Rights Movement. We had the all the past of slavery, and post-slavery, and leading up to the Civil Rights Movement. We had the Civil Rights Movement. Now what do we do? There was one area that we really haven't addressed. And the reason we didn't address it--. Because we, including Martin Luther King, and all the--. And Floyd McKissick, and the Urban League guy, Whitney Young, and the NAACP, we didn't have the time to even think about doing anything but kicking doors open, and getting jobs for our people, and all this stuff, and getting educated, and getting into these colleges, and all this stuff. But the one area that we didn't address, for a number of reasons, was this idea of how we fit into capitalism, and how we can survive and progress under capitalism. I mean, even if you become a first-class citizen, I mean, that's not enough. So I began, many, many years ago, to start think about building wealth and what that meant. And that's why I started the Black Economic Development Task Force, the Community Economic Development Group at the university, and stuff like that, because there's a need for us--. All of us, really, whites, and blacks, and Latinos--. To really understand capitalism, how it works, and what we need to do to benefit from this. You're not going to replace

capitalism, as Bernie Sanders might think he can do, but--. Or would like to do, maybe. But we've got to understand it, and then we've got to understand very strongly that capitalism wasn't just a word that was thrown up there. I mean, capitalism means something. In the first place, [1:55:00] the word "capital" is very important in our economic system. That's why they call it capitalism. And so a lot of people never even--. When I talk to clients at San Diego State in the program that I founded, they didn't really connect that. I mean, you need capital if you're going to--. I mean, if you're really going to be successful in America, maybe you only have a little bit of capital that comes through your savings, you know, but you have to have some savings. You can't spend everything that comes into your household. So my thing is, we've got to really focus now on educating, not just getting people an education, high school, and on to college, but getting them some education in this whole area of our economic system and how to survive and prosper in that. And so, that's where I think we should be going. And as I get into my book, I'm going to have a part of it devoted to pointing that out. This is what we should do. We haven't done it in the past. We weren't able to do it. I mean, Martin Luther King, as great as he was, he didn't know anything about economics, and business, and all of that stuff. That wasn't his area. He was in theology. And so we really, I think, have got to--. And that's why I started the Black Economic Development Task Force, was to get us thinking about--. I mean, at that time, in 1987, when we started that, you couldn't get--. I mean, black people couldn't even get that out of the--. Black what? I mean, economics--. I mean, they couldn't form those two words together. And so now they can, because we had the program, and there's been more around the country about it. But I don't hear about black wealth. And we've--. Many of us have been taught that wealth is bad, money--. What do they say? Money corrupts, and all that. And until I--.

In my class, and I explained how money can help. But you got to have money to help and to survive. And the more you have, through whatever profession you decide to go into, through your savings and all that, through capital. If you're into real estate development, like I am, you know, you need capital. You just can't go out there. You got to purchase land and build, and that takes money. And so we--. One of the big things that stands in the way of that, of our getting involved in that, as a black population, is that we have never learned to work together. You know, other than the church, you know, we have really--. And I'm not so sure it's about the church. [Laughter] There's a lot of not getting along in the church. But we need to really focus now on that area, and learn how to really be successful. And really, what I see happening now, which--. I hesitate then because I'm not around the whole--. I don't know what's going on around the country that well. But what I see happening is that, after the Civil Rights Movement, we hit a wall. As black people, we hit a wall. And we're not doing--. We got--. Some people got some jobs, good jobs. I'm one of them. You know, we got good jobs. My wife's got a good job. My friends--. Our friends in the fraternity, they all have good jobs. But we still have so much poverty. And within the black population, we have so much lack of education. Within the black population, we have so much--. So many people under the criminal justice system. I mean, these are all problems that we have, that we have not really found a way to address them. And usually [2:00:00] all this stuff, education and all that stuff, you know, takes money. And one of the things that we need to learn about capitalism is that, you know, capitalism exists on spending, spenders. And we've become some of the greatest spenders around. I mean, black folks spend a lot of their money. In fact, Tony--.

DK: But never become generators of--. Yeah.

HB: That's right. They never--. That's right. And we're always looking for jobs, but we don't supply jobs, create jobs.

DK: In some ways, it's a question of what power looks like.

HB: Yeah.

DK: And power's an equation, and this is a piece of that.

HB: Yeah, exactly.

DK: And just, when you were talking, it reminded me of a conversation with a long, long-time activist in Georgia. And I asked him--. We were talking about when black p--. The phrase "black power" first started getting used.

HB: Yeah. With Stokely.

DK: Yeah. And I asked him what he thought, what it meant to him. And he said economic power. Self-determination and economic power. That's what it's got to be.

HB: Yes. Exactly.

DK: I was reminded of that when you were speaking.

HB: You reminded me just now of the term "self-determination." That was something that was very strong within me that--. It just motivated me so much because I could see one day where we would have things in our hands, where we could determine for ourselves what we wanted to do. And I think that was one of the problems with me, with the peace movement, and the Trotskyites, and communists, and all that stuff. I mean, first of all, they were all white. There were no blacks involved in that. And secondly, they wanted to impose their will on CORE. And, I mean, I was just dead-set against that because I was very, very interested and concerned with self-determination, and I used that term at meetings in CORE. But that's where I see us going. But, you know, there has to be an example, and so

when I left, retired from San Diego State, I set out to make an example of how it can be done. And that's why I'm in real estate and land development now. And I'm with a couple partners, and so forth. I think they have to see it happen. And they have to see it happen, not by an athlete, not by someone who broke into the movies, a movie star. You know, at least they see it happening with--. Why am I blocking on these things? The guy in the music industry--. These guys, rap guys. You know, you see it happening. A few, here and there. But we've got to find a way to show our kids that, you know, say, "Oh, yeah, Hal Brown. Mr. Brown is a millionaire." "He is?" "Yeah. Well, who he play for?" [Laughter]

DK: Himself.

HB: [Laughter] Himself.

DK: [Inaudible,] Yeah.

HB: Exactly, exactly. And they've got to see examples of that. Our son, who plays basketball for Stanford, he--. The coach, I guess, had them going out in the community, and talking to kids, and so forth. So our son told us--. He said he went out to talk to a group of kids, and he was all prepared to talk with them about school and things like that. And before he could really get started, they said--. Kids raised their hand and said, "How much do your shoes cost?" He had on tennis shoes. "What kind of car do you drive?" Just went on and on like that. It was so frustrating for him. I mean, they missed the mark so much. And that's what--. I mean, what surprises me, though, is that so much of that still exists to this day. And I go [2:05:00] around, and me and my fraternity, and so forth. I mean, you know, doctors, and lawyers, businessmen, educators, all in high positions, we all had high positions, but no education, really, in business, economics, and that sort of thing. So, I mean, medicine. A lot of doctors, and so--. But I just think that's the next step. And I

said this back in about 19--. sometime in the 1980s, and I wrote--. We used to have black economic summits. That was my idea. You know, bring people together and talk about economics. And we did that for several years. And in our program, we would always have something from me in the front of the program. And I remember talking about what we should be doing and bringing about a real consciousness of making economics a part of--. Should be the next step. That's the word I use. The next step of the Civil Rights Movement should be in economic development. Well, I thought it was going to take off around the country. I thought I saw signs of things happening, and so forth, but not really. I think we hit a wall. And as an example, here in San Diego--. And I must admit, I just don't have a feel for what's going on around the country, in the communities, and so forth. I know what's going on politically. [Laughter] But we just--. I see a wall, and we haven't really--. I mean, we've gotten some jobs, as I said earlier. But, you know, that's it. San Diego, in the CORE days, when we had CORE, we had a voice. The city fathers, and so forth, when things came up, who's those guys, CORE came to mind. We don't have a voice now. I just met with the--. I just met--. I've been talking with the president/CEO of the San Diego Urban League. And he wanted to know--. Get my thoughts on things, on how the Urban League could become more effective, and so on. And so we've been meeting, and so forth, and I put together a group of guys as a kind of a think tank to just sit around and talk with him, and so on. And we did that one Saturday, and we'd probably do it again. But someone has to kind of take the lead, and not only in the African American community, but, I mean, the same applies for the Latino community, same with the Filipino community, and same with the Asian and --.

DK: Yeah. I mean, and do you see some potential? Because some--. You know, especially with--. You were giving an example of CORE and some of the other groups that--. Sometimes it's the seed of anger that--. Or, you know, that motivates that. So do you see any potential, then, with what we saw with the Black Lives Matter, or with the folks who were following Bernie Sanders you talked about? Do you see any of that emotional--. Whatever is driving those movements that gives you some hope at all?

HB: Unfortunately, no. You know, I don't. And you're absolutely right. And we've said that years back. There's got to be some anger or you don't get anything done. Somebody has to do something to cause a lot of commotion. And then you will get people's attention. But without that--. So the only place that I know of, where it can be done, is it has to be forced on them, in the schools. [2:10:00] And I thought the black studies programs around the country would do that, but I don't see any signs of their knowing. I mean, talking about your project here, I mean, the need for it is so great, because people don't even know about it. People in my age group, here in San Diego, you say something about the Civil Rights Movement in San Diego, they go, "What? I didn't know there was a Civil Rights Movement in San Diego." And those are the people in my age group [who] should have known about it, but not--. But doesn't participate in it. They should've really known about it. But then they--. Now, the younger people, they have no idea. I can remember speaking to a class at San Diego State, when we formed the black--. When we formed the Afro American studies program. And--. But must've been 1972. And I was asked by one of the faculty members that I hired to come around and speak to the group about--. [To] her class about the Civil Rights Movement. And I went in there. None of them knew anything. Now that was back then. So we really have a problem, I think, and I don't know how else we can

do it unless it's force-fed through the schools that people--. See, my goal, one of my goals, was, in the Afro American studies program that I got organized at San Diego State, was to eventually market it to the total university, I mean, because that had just made sense to me. It just can't be for black students. And so I sort of got ousted a little bit because of some more internal thing. I don't know. I wish they could write--. People around the country who were much more involved than I, and so forth, they could write about this internal stuff that happens in the--. I bet you Jesse Jackson could write a whole lot about it, and the guy who started this, who got involved with starting this project.

DK: At the--.

M: John Lewis.

HB: Charles. I mean, Lewis.

DK: John Lewis.

HB: John, John. I bet you they could tell you a whole lot of stories about the infighting and stuff that went on that sort of kept the progress from being more than it was. So--.

DK: I tell you, we're still having the same fights and conversations that--. What you were saying about it shouldn't--. Black studies shouldn't just be over here, you know, stuck in its corner. These are classes that should be in the general curriculum. We're still fighting that.

HB: Absolutely. And, you know, I'm much older now, more tired. [Laughter] Better known as worn out.

DK: Well, it is--. It does wear you out, right?

HB: It wears you out, honestly. I mean, when I finished the Civil Rights Movement, I mean, my--. I didn't know what was going on at the time, but when I left CORE, I mean, my nervous system was shot. I couldn't sit at a meeting or talk to people about it. I couldn't--. I mean, my nervous system was completely shot. I didn't realize what was going on, but evidently, that was close to a nervous breakdown. So--.

DK: And not uncommon at all.

HB: Yeah, I bet.

DK: We talked to other activists. Absolutely. Yeah.

HB: I bet. Man.

DK: High stress.

HB: Yes, high stress.

DK: It's almost post-traumatic stress in some cases. Yeah.

HB: You're the first person--. I've thought about that a lot, and I've said it to my wife. But, I mean, I don't sleep well, and I play back a lot of stuff over all those years, and it hit me one time. I mean, that's what they're talking about, about people coming back from the wars and stuff, post-traumatic stress. [2:15:00] Same stuff.

DK: It's absolutely the same stuff. Yeah. And I think it's just beginning--. Some of the activists are just beginning to recognize that and--. You know, and there are some activists who--. It tore them apart early up--. You know, early on. They ended up strung out on drugs, or whatever.

HB: Yeah, exactly.

DK: Couldn't deal with it. It can--. As you say, it can really mess you up.

HB: Oh, boy. It can. It can really mess you up. And so, anyhow, I think that's where we need to go. That's part of the answer, anyhow, I think, that we've got to really get--. I mean, we got to get economic-minded, and we've got to--. Do you remember--. Last name was Brown. I'm having trouble.

DK: [Laughter] I'm wearing you out right now.

HB: Whoa. Tony. Tony Brown. You know about Tony Brown? Tony Brown had a program on KPBS for some years. And he was--. His focus was on economics, black businesses, and all this stuff. And he--. There's a--. I have a videotape on--. That he put together, showing how the black spending, and how blacks only spent 1 percent or less in those black communities. And he's talking about back years and years. But Tony, I don't know what happened to him. I don't think he died. But he sort of disappeared. He put out a movie called *White Girl*. *White Girl* isn't what you think he's talking about. He's talking about the drugs that was called white girl. And he put out that movie, and I helped him to get it out here in San Diego and stuff. But Tony was very active in this area of building black businesses and creating wealth among--. He may not have used the word "wealth" so much, but that's what he was talking about, doing that. So maybe if we had somebody on the level of John Lewis, you know, in Congress, which reminds me, I don't know why we don't get this kind of a message from the Black Caucus, the black congress people. See, I don't see any leadership coming from them, although I like them. I love them because they're in these positions and stuff, but I don't see any real leadership coming. When Jesse Jackson disappeared, and then we had the Rev--.

M: Sharpton?

HB: Sharpton. You know, have him. But you don't see--. I remember Jesse used to come out here in San Diego many, many years ago. He'd be talking and talking and talking about--. And preaching all this stuff, and never, nothing, not a word about the importance of economics. Back in--. I remember saying that back in those years. Well, we don't have anybody in leadership positions to speak to that. You know, if I could get my hands on Hillary, I would twist her arm. Hillary, I'll make a five-dollar donation. Now listen. [Laughter]

M: I'll raise you five if she goes along with it.

HB: If she goes--. [Laughter]

DK: She's got a website, I understand, and you can probably--.

HB: That's true. If she ever--. You know, where does that go? Oh, well. Interesting world. There's a very interesting--.

FEMALE 1: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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